(a) whether it is a fact that poaching of rhinos at the Kaziranga National Park has assumed alarming proportion;

(b) if so, what is the total number of rhinos killed by the poachers -at the end of 1992 and since the beginning of 1993 and what is the present population in the National Park; and

(c) what measures have been taken by Government to put an end to the poaching of rhinos ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) and (b) Rhino poaching in Kaziranga Sanctuary has become a serious menace to the conservation efforts of the Government. Four Rhinos in November, 92 and seven Rhinos in December, 1992 were killed in the Park by the poachers. During the current year upto 4-4-93, total number of rhinos killed by poachers was 18. The present population of rhinos is estimated to be 1164 as against 1129 of 1991 census.

(c) The measures taken by the Government to prevent poaching of Rhinos include :

i. The Rhino has been included in Schedule I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, thereby giving the species maximum possible legal protection and imposing a complete ban on hunting of the Rhinos in India. The act provides for stringent punitive measure against poaching of this animal.

ii. Assistance under centrally sponsored scheme "Conservation of rhinos in Assam" is provided for strengthening measures against poaching, floods, fires and encroachments and for acquisition of land to expand protected area. Under this scheme additional protection squads equipped with arms, wireless sets, vehicles, boats etc., have been created. This scheme covers all the natural habitats of Rhino in Assam. The scheme alongwith resources has been transferred to State Sector from 1992-93.

iii. With international cooperation a ban on international trade in rhino horn and other animal products from the rhino has been enforced under the provisions of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna (CITES).

iv. Government of India has established 4 regional offices at Delhi, Bombay, Madras and Calcutta, headed by officers of the rank of Deputy Director, for the purpose of better check of wildlife trade. These regional offices are further supported by three sub-regional offices at Cochin, Guwahati and Pathankot for meeting the needs of a more decentralised control set up in the interest of trade and commerce as also for better regulation.

v. For securing greater involvement of other enforcement agencies like coast guards, ITBP, army etc., short term training courses are being planned/conducted at the Wildlife Institute of India at Dehradun.

Depleting habitat in the Neriyamangalain Range

1047. SHRI MOHINDER SINGH LATHER : SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH :

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the report appearing in the Indian Express dated 1st April, 1993 regarding depleting habitat in the Neriyamangabm Range Forcing the Elephants in the sanctuary to take on the settlers around with the increasing Summer Heat; and

(b) if so, what steps are contemplated by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) and (b) Government has seen the reports. While the possibility of fire or non-availability of water and depletion of fodder in the habitat, partly due to degradation and partly due to the drying up of the ponds, trees and grass during summer leading to an escalation of man-elephant conflict in the area can not be ruled out, there is no scientific evidence to suggest that the conflict is aggravated by the heat perse.

Project Elephant, launched by Govt, of India aims at understanding the causes of such conflicts and assisting the State Governments for mitigation of such problems. Restoration of elephant habitat, restoration of migration corridors and plantation of fodder species are some of the main activities covered under the scheme. The State Govt, of Kerala was provided assistance of Rs. 120.00 lacks and Rs. 14.02 lacks under the scheme during 1991-92 and 1992-93 respectively.

Involving the industries in forestry in the Country

1048. SHRI ANANT RAM JAISWAL :

SHRI SATYA PRAKASH MALAVIYA :

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government are considering a proposal to involve the industries in the country in forestry; and

(b) if so, what are the details of the decision if any, taken in this regard stating the manner in which the industries are proposed to be involved in the forestry ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH): (a) No proposal to involve industries in the forestry in the country is under consideration of the Government.

(b) Does not arise.

Mining rejects dumped in the sea

1049. SHRI JOHN F. FERNAN-DES : Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that mining rejects are dumped in the sea at Redi, Maharashtra, thus causing water pollution and endangering marine life;

(b) if so, what remedial steps are contemplated to avert this environmental disaster; and

(c) whether the mining firm has been penalised for degrading environment ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI KAMAL NATH) : (a) to (c) The Government issued notices to the two mining project authorities at Redi to stop dumping of the mine rejects